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Senegal risks losing access to EU fish market because of illegal licensing

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An EU delegation met with the Senegal fisheries ministry and with representatives of the fisheries sector to inform them that the EU was investigating the conditions under which foreign trawlers are fishing small pelagic stocks in waters under Senegal's jurisdiction, in the context of the EU regulation against IUU fishing.

The EU delegation warned that Senegal risked having its approval to export fish products to the EU market withdrawn, and being designated as a non-cooperating state in relation to the IUU regulation, because fishing authorisations allocated to these vessels were not in conformity with Senegalese law.

Senegalese fishing professionals reiterated that the European market is their main export market, particularly for the artisanal fishery which supplies 70% of exports. They recalled that from the start they had warned the authorities about the risks of providing these licenses illegally to foreign trawlers, both with regard to the strategic small-pelagic resources and the fishing sector.

Sources

Press release, *Agence de Presse Sénégalaise*, 'Octroi des licences de pêche: le CONIPAS craint de "perdre" le marché européen', 14 July 2011

http://www.aps.sn/aps.php?page=articles&id_article=82399

Editorial comment

This highlights the IUU regulation's underutilised potential. It could withdraw Senegal's export agreement on the basis that Senegalese authorities have illegally delivered fishing licences. Such a step would be the first time an ACP country, indeed one of the foremost ACP fish exporters to the EU, would see its exports banned through the application of the IUU regulation.

It is also worth noting that this controversial allocation of licences concerns small pelagic species, a crucial resource for food security in West Africa, and an important stock targeted by the Senegalese artisanal sector, the main supplier of the EU market, albeit of demersal species. Were exports to be banned this sector would suffer in two ways. First, because licences have been allocated to their competitors, foreign freezer trawlers fishing for small pelagics; second because they will be prevented from selling their fish on the lucrative EU market. It is therefore not surprising that Senegalese fishing professionals are highly concerned about the outcome of this situation.

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